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ABSTRACT
          The use of deconstruction requires the belief that human
thought swims in a language system that operates according to rules
independent of the thought being expressed. This paper discusses the merit of
using deconstruction in educational administration. Since educational
administration is dependent upon language use, it is essential that those
ideas that are "seen" and those that remain "hidden" in the language be
explored. Deconstruction challenges assumptions in the language and explores
the hidden contradictions in expressions. It is a tool for investigating
textual meanings and the larger narratives that govern a discipline or a
field of study. Deconstruction is a double reading of a text, where the first
reading establishes the text's dominant interpretation and the second reading
locates contradictions to that dominant perspective. It can be used to
analyze the silences or gaps in a text and it can help locate prior ideas or
concepts. For example, in deconstructing the concept of the school climate,
it can be shown that nearly all modern educational administration texts draw
on a model of organizational climate that was created from studies of bomber
commanders and crew satisfaction. The model itself is rarely criticized for
its contradictions and circularities. (Contains 31 references.) (RJM)

USING TECHNIQUES OF DECONSTRUCTION IN ANALYZING PROBLEMS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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The Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of the paper is to stimulate thinking about using deconstruction in educational administration. One of the problems in addressing the use of deconstruction is that the body of literature which is descriptive and critical of it lies largely outside the conceptual and experiential domains of professors and practitioners. Both groups may encounter a new vocabulary and conceptual field that may initially appear abstract and dense.

For example, here is one definition of a "deconstructive reading" (Critchley, 1992):

> A deconstructive reading shows both how a text is dependent upon the presuppositions of a metaphysics of presence or logocentrism—that is...any text which identifies truth with presence or logos...and how the text radically questions the metaphysics it presupposes, thereby entering into contradiction with itself and pointing the way towards a thinking that would be other to logocentrism" (pp. 201).

The leading figure in deconstruction is Jacques Derrida who has explained that deconstruction is neither negative, nor is it destructive (Critchley, 1992, p. 21). Deconstruction is not an exercise in reductionistic analysis, nor is it a critique or a method. It is, rather, a double reading of a text. The first reading is what is determined to be the dominant interpretation, i.e., what the majority of readers would indicate a text is about. The second reading is an attempt to locate "blind spots" or

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"circularities" and contradictions to that dominant interpretation (Critchley, 1992, p.23).

Educational Administration as a Text

Educational administration is as dependent upon language use as any other scholarly area. The discourse of the field is embedded within a linguistic system in which ideas are expressed. "Thought remains the captive of the linguistic mode in which it seeks to grasp the outline of objects inhabiting its field of perception" (Leitch,1983, p. 127).

The use of deconstruction requires a posture of understanding that human thought swims in a language system which operates according to rules independent of the thought being expressed. This language system colors perception, determines what is "seen" and what remains "hidden," and delineates what thoughts are expressed first, second and third.

Deconstruction exposes these rules, challenges them, and seeks to expose the hidden contradictions in languistic expressions. De-construction also looks at matters of voice (Leitch, 1983). For example, it questions who is speaking and who is not? It seeks to answer who gains from accepting the position of the speaker and who does not? De-construction asks the question what isn't being said? What topics are not addressed? The delineation of the answers to these questions means probing the "hidden silences" of a

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text or a narrative. Sometimes they are referred to as "the politics of erasure."

Deconstruction is a powerful tool to investigate textual meanings and the larger narratives (stories) or metanarratives (Cherryholmes, 1988) that govern a discipline or a field of studies. It is just beginning to emerge in the literature of educational administration (English, 1994; Littrell and Foster, 1995; Reitzug and Capper, 1996; English, 1997).

Deconstruction is based on certain linguistic tenets derived from Saussure (1916, 1959), and extended in the works of Derrida (1967) and Foucault (1972). Some of these are:

(1) meaning is found in the difference to other words (no word by itself means anything);

(2) meaning is always moving between words;

(3) meaning is endlessly shifting, deferring any final determination;

(4) meaning can never become fixed.

(5) as a linear phenomenon, text centers some ideas and subordinates or silences others. The process of subordination is one called "marginalization."

In educational administration views of women and minorities have been silenced or marginalized (Shakeshaft, 1989).

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These principles radically challenge the dominant metanarratives in educational administration that assume that meaning can be precisely determined, fixed, and can be worked into a knowledge base that is stable.

The idea of a "knowledge base" is dependent upon sets of meanings derived from largely empirical procedures that as generalizations transcend specific contexts. The one goal of empirical science has been to elevate certain generalizations above others in order to derive generic "truths" (Murphy, 1995, p.69).

How De-Construction Works

As a form of double-reading, de-construction can be applied with at least two approaches. They are:

1) <u>Analysis of the Silences or Gaps</u>

All texts contain that which is not said. Sometimes that which is not said is suspended in a binary opposite. For example, one cannot consider a statement "true" without also suspending simultaneously the idea of "false". Rather than opposites with hard borders, "true" and "false" are relational (i.e., defined by relation to each other) and hence constitute one thing, not two. (See Furbank, 1998, p.29).

Much of educational research regarding leadership is dependent upon linguistic opposites that viewed from this perspective collapse into inseparable unities. Both the "effective schools research" and "school climate" studies are dependent upon binary oppositions with roots to

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linguistic premises. One clue to this phenomenon is that variables show high correlative interdependence, but together have low predictability potential. Logically, this problem is an example of Russell's V.C.P. (vicious circle principle). The V.C.P. indicates that one cannot define something by comparing or correlating it to itself. In the words of Haack (1978) "a collection musn't involve or be definable only in terms of itself" (p. 14).

2) <u>Re- Establishing the Trace</u>

Concepts and ideas move beyond their original meanings and contexts. Modern science does two things. First, it engages in generalizations beyond specific contexts. Second, it seeks to establish an origin of an idea at the point of generalization. Following the idea of parsimony, sometimes referred to as Occam's razor (that one should not deal with unnecessary entities), modernism wants to simplify and erase specific differences. But Occam's razor is not a scientific principle. It is a philosophical premise. "There is no logical reason why a parsimonious theory, rather than an extravagant one, should be true." (<u>The Economist</u> (1996), p. 82).

Ideas and concepts jump contexts and frameworks. For example, Darwin's notion of progressive development contained in the theory of evolution has been shown to be the defining metaphor for Freud's work (Sulloway,1979). Yet Freud and his followers systematically worked to erase traces of Darwinian and Lamarckian concepts from his

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research which they believed enhanced the originality of psychoanalytic theory (Sulloway, 1979, p. 498). Similar criticisms have been leveled of Pasteur's work (Geison, 1995). These postmodern criticisms point to the fact that scientists practice the "politics of knowledge construction," including the practice of erasure.

What deconstruction does is to search for the prior traces of an idea or concept. It is a kind of etymological search which reveals that there is "no unmodified zero point, no pure origin of all modification" (Evans, 1991, p. 125). The present is merely a kind of endless re-petition, a trace that transcends definitive boundaries or starting points.

We can see these forces at work in educational administration in the following two illustrative areas:

DECONSTRUCTING SCHOOL CLIMATE

The use of deconstruction applied to the concept of school climate reveals that nearly all modern educational administration texts (Hoy and Miskel, 1982, p. 187; Silver, 1983, p. 184; Hoy and Forsyth, 1986, p.147; Owens, 1987, p.298; Lunenburg, and Ornstein, 1991, p. 4) show that organizational climate originated with Halpin and Croft's publication in 1963 The Organizational Climate of Schools.

None of these texts describe the previous work on which OCDQ was based, i.e., studies of B-29 commanders and crew satisfaction. The measure of effectiveness was combat

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performance over Korea during the war (Halpin, 1966, p.
100).

The lack of attention to the creation of the LBDQ
(Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire) and its
roots in military combat situations is an example of
"political erasure". It is a crucial "silence" in the
utilization of the OCDQ. Furthermore, Halpin's crossover
rationale from studies of B-29 bomber captains to school
superintendents has never been seriously questioned, despite
the fact that a review of key assumptions reveals that the
theoretical framework he imposed on his research not only
preshaped his data, but did not support his premises.

Some examples:

● Halpin (1966) lays out his rationale for what he
  is going to assess by arguing that leadership
  is generic (p.25). Since it is assumed to be
  generic he then uses the LBDQ to assess school
  superintendents. He finds a different profile
  of effectiveness (p. 107) for bomber commanders
  and school superintendents. He then argues that
  the difference is due to differences in setting
  (p. 110), which is true by definition since his
  theoretical approach has ruled out any different
  conclusion from being reached.

● Halpin's empirical data showing a difference
  between air commanders and superintendents would
  support a contrary assumption, i.e., that there
  are no generic factors and that the differences
  identified were internal. But Halpin
  had rejected this idea of even studying leadership as
  not worthy because "traits" could not be the subject of
  training programs. The interesting point here is that
  the empirical data gathered by Halpin could
  support more than one theory. If so, what was Halpin
  testing and how viable was the "bridge" he constructed
  between B-29 captains and school superintendents? To
  really test his theory would require the captains and
  superintendents to exchange roles and then see if
  (a) administrative behavior was generic; (b) different

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behavioral profiles were caused by differences in settings. Can it be said that a theory is tested if the data it allegedly produces can also explain a contrary theory?

● Although Halpin stresses the need to examine behavior and verbal accounts as the sole measure of leadership, he does not actually examine it in practice. A review of the questions in the LBDQ reveal that the descriptors represent "clusters" and "mixtures" of a range of behaviors and talk. For example here is one of the items:
"He makes his attitudes clear to the staff." It should be obvious that this "behavior" does not reference any specific situation because none is identified. A specific situation would have been something like,
"When he [a B-29 commander] is confronted with a choice about what's more important, dropping bombs over the target or aborting the run because of heavy flak, the captain always chooses completion of the bombing run."

Halpin's LBDQ questions are:
1- not a measure of any specific situation. If such specific situations were measured they would not support the assumption of generic administrative behavior being tested;
2- Halpin's behaviors are representative of responses comprising plural actions over many situations. The answer is a representative of a generalization by the respondent.
3- Despite the fact that Halpin insists upon "every concept which is used in thinking about administrative behavior must be defined, and operational definitions must be employed..." (p.23) he does not do so. He speaks of "leadership style" without ever defining it or providing an operational definition (p.88).

This double reading of Halpin has shown that the research (a text) he conducted contains circularities and contradictions. The second reading of Halpin's research brings into question the "stability" of the text and its dominant commentary. By interposing questions the "stability" of the dominant reading is brought "into contradiction with itself, opening its intended

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meaning...onto an alterity which goes against what the text wants to say or mean" (Critchley, 1992, p. 27).

DECONSTRUCTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The idea of "continuous improvement" is one of the badges of the quality movement attributed to Edward Deming. The idea has caught the fancy of educators. It has been embraced as a critical "disposition" in the new nationally developed <u>Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium</u> (p.10).

In deconstructing "continuous improvement" (or CI) we first encounter the dominant commentary. As most people understand the concept it implies repeating certain acts until perfection is attained (Kaufman and Zahn, 1993, p.15). Bradley (1993) insists that "standards and tolerances are not static...standards are based on updated performance data" (p. 30) "The aim is continuous improvement" (p. 68).

The idea appears to be that improvement, however translated or defined, is simply a never-ending process, and-- it is the process, not the standard or the tolerance that is the key.

The double reading of CI presents some of the contradictions inherent in the concept. Deming (1986) described continuous improvement as a hypothetical statistical line in which quality improved. This was the result of removing special causes. However, as these causes are eliminated one by one to those which are common, quality stabilizes (p. 323). In order to continue to improve quality, Deming urges his readers to return to his "Fourteen

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points" and declares, "The difference is that with a sound program, the curve for improvement of quality and productivity does not level off" (p. 324). The fifth point of Deming's fourteen points is, "Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service, to improve quality and productivity, and thus constantly decrease costs" (p.23).

Deming provides no examples of his proclamation. In fact, his and most of the advocates of CI employ an elliptical set of definitions. First, comes the admonition that standards are not stable. This premise contradicts the notion of a standard. Secondly, the idea of CI, is substituted for a standard. As Bradley says, "standards are not fixed...the aim is continuous improvement" (p. 68). He then reiterates that "total quality management is based on the standard of continuous improvement" (p. 68). Kaufman and Zahn (1993) express the same set of premises, "Total quality management and continuous improvement--we sall the integrated process of defining and achieving total quality on a continuous improvement basis quality management" (p. 7).

Deming's discussion of continuous improvement is an article of faith. It is firmly rooted in the concept of progress as a never ending search for betterment based on the idea of historical constancy. Progress is a nineteenth century concept which has become popularized in Deming's work as an actor "who planned progress and who was the agent of change...The actor could intervene in the world to

produce progressive change over time" (Popkewitz, 1997, p. 20).

It was within the statistical control chart that CI was spawned. But supporting the use of the chart in removing special causes implied that time and process were similarly controlled, as well as the people who were part of the process. "...social conduct is enacted in spaces that are unchanged except through the operation of time itself" (Popkewitz, 1997, p. 21)

CI is inherently a conservative notion. Since standards are temporary and not fixed, the relentless drive to change them and improve is measured by one variable--the reduction of cost. What is different about Deming is that he employed CI as a way of driving out fear, but not of emancipation. He also reserved for himself "the Progressive slogan of expert knowledge...[as] redemptive" (Popkewitz, 1997, p. 23). This concept of human agency is thoroughly preserved in the ISLLC standards and CI is presented as a requisite "belief" and not as a cognitive method or operation to realize higher aims or goal acquisition. Because standards are essentially marginalized, the reduction of costs becomes the benchmark of measurement.

This "second reading" invites a comparison of quality management to that of scientific management which I constructed earlier (English, 1994, p.212) and which is shown below:

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A COMPARISON BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT
AND TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Area	Scientific Management	Total Quality Management
Authority	Reinforces top management	Same
Voices legitimated	The expert external to the system	Same
Major metaphor	The assembly line	Same
Primary data source	Stopwatch—task analysis	Statistical control charts
Primary approach to problem solving	Reduction of variance	Same
Employee motivators	External—piece-rate systems	Internal—"empowerment"
Implicit objective	Elimination of waste	Same
Major tactic	Didactic—one right way	Same

Summary

The use of deconstruction in educational administration can be a useful process to:

(1) re-examine the efficacy of concepts included in the knowledge base;

(2) understand that the process of "research" is anchored as much in faith as empiricism;

(3) challenge the idea that empirical data can really test any theory, presenting the view that the theory produces data but is not tested by it;

(4) the instability of language and its propensity to include antinomies and use rules which bend thought, produce textual contradictions that may nullify what

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is meant in the dominant or first reading of a text.

(5) Research based on linguistic protocols which depend on

oppositional terms may display high intercorrelations,

but may not improve prediction because they are the

not independent attributes.

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